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The Uses of Binary Thinking

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There is an ancient tradition of binary or dichotomous thinking—of framing issues in terms of opposites such as sun/moon, reason/passion. G.E.R. Lloyd speaks of "the remarkable prevalence of theories based on opposition in so many societies at different stages of technological development" (80).[1] This binary tradition is still strong and forms a kind of foundation for the many varieties of structuralism. But in recent years, especially with the deconstructive reaction against structuralism, we have seen strong criticism of this tradition of seeing things in terms of opposites. Hélène Cixous is one of many voices arguing that wherever there are polar oppositions, there is dominance—some classic terms are day/night, sun/moon, reason/passion—and, of course, lurking behind all these pairs is usually gender: male/female. According to this critique, binary thinking almost always builds in dominance or privilege—sometimes overtly and sometimes covertly.[2]

Even when people try to overturn or reverse the traditional dominance in a polar opposition—proclaiming for example that dark is better than light, passion than reason, female than male—it just means that the underdog is defined as overdog, and we are still left with thinking in terms of dominance or hierarchy. One side is privileged. Furthermore (so goes this critique), even when we avoid giving victory to one side and instead work out a compromise or else a Hegelian synthesis into a new, third term, we still see the same problem. When the Hegelian bulldozer pushes toward "higher" order or unity—even if the compromise is really "fair" and the synthesis doesn't favor either the thesis or antithesis—difference and diversity are eliminated. Jonathan Culler sums up this point of view in his appreciation of de Man: "Deconstruction seeks to undo all oppositions that, in the name of unity, purity, order, and hierarchy, try to eliminate difference" ("Paul" 278).

Even though Culler and de Man are complaining about oppositions and I am defending oppositions, I want to take this quotation as a kind of foundation for my essay, for I am defending only one *kind* or *mode* of dichotomous thinking. I think I can show that oppositional thinking, if handled in the right way, will serve as a way to *avoid* the very problems Culler and de Man are troubled by: "purity, order, and hierarchy." That is, binary thinking can serve to encourage difference—indeed, encourage non-dominance, non-transcendence, instability, disorder.

In making this point, I'm calling on a venerable tradition. For there are really two traditions of binary or dialectical thinking. The better known is the Hegelian tradition. It uses binary thinking as a motor always to press on to a third term or a higher category that represents a transcendent reconciliation or unity: thesis and antithesis are always harnessed to yield synthesis. Since Hegel, the ancient and broad word *dialectic* has tended to be narrowed to connote this three-termed process.

But there is another tradition of binary thinking. It is older and called itself "dialectic" long before Hegel. This tradition sees value in accepting, putting up with, indeed seeking the nonresolution of the two terms: not feeling that the opposites must be somehow reconciled, not feeling that the itch must be scratched. This tradition goes as far back as the philosophy of yin/yang. In the West we see it in Socrates/Plato, in Boethius, and in Peter Abelard's *Sic et Non*, and it continues down through the present. The goal is *lack* of resolution of opposites. Here are some formulations we can associate with this tradition:[3]

> "Without contraries is no progression." "Opposition is true Friendship." Blake.

> "Not a dialectical either/or, but a dialogic both/and." Bakhtin.

> "Mankind likes to think in terms of extreme opposites. It is given to formulating its beliefs in terms of *Either-Ors*, between which it recognizes no intermediate possibilities." Dewey.

> "The opposite of a correct statement is a false statement. But the opposite of a profound truth may well be another profound truth." Niels Bohr.

> "No mind can engender until divided into two." Yeats.

> "The test of a first-rate intelligence is the ability to hold two opposed ideas in mind at the same time, and still retain the ability to function." F. Scott Fitzgerald[4]

Both dialectical traditions go back to Socrates and Plato with their interest in setting arguments against each other. We see both impulses in the Platonic dialogues: on the one hand a strong desire to let the battle produce a single answer or winner, but on the other hand a recognition that sometimes we have to leave things unreconciled. Boethius was conscious of both responses to oppositions. Operating in the Neo-Platonic tradition, he believed that unity or truth often exists in a realm or form where human reason cannot grasp it either with logic or language, and that the closest we can come to the highest or deepest knowledge is to try to hold in mind propositions that are irreconcilable. Boethius writes,

> What cause of discord breaks the ties which ought to bind this union of things? What God has set such conflict between these two truths? Separately each is certain, but put together they cannot be reconciled. Is there no discord between them? Can they exist side by side and be equally true? (V, Met 3)

Chaucer was influenced by Boethius, and it was during my work on Chaucer that I first became aware of this tradition. Since then I've repeatedly seen the value of this approach: noticing oppositions or conflicts, even seeking them, but leaving them unresolved. Practice with this approach has led me to suspect that when we encounter something that is difficult or complicated or something that tangles people into endless debate, we are often in the presence of an opposition that needs to be made more explicit—and left unreconciled.[5]

Why Dichotomies?

I hear an obvious objection at this point: "You are simply suggesting a different way to *handle* binary thinking, as though you are bent on *saving* binary thinking. The answer is to get rid of binary thinking; it's too pat and limited. I thought you were interested in complexity, and here you want to keep everything in neat pairs." I admit that two is not a very large or complex number. Having three or more options is great. Nothing in this paper is meant as an argument against framing issues in terms of more than two sides. Just so long as there's *more than one*! If we can see *three* or *five* sides, that's good—so long as that multiplicity isn't a cover for letting one side be the real winner. My real goal in this paper is not to have pairs but to get away from simple, single truth—to have situations of balance, irresolution, nonclosure, nonconsensus, nonwinning.

So, multiplicity is fine, yet I will focus in this paper on pairs and binary thinking for several reasons. First, there's no hope of getting away from binary oppositions given the nature of the human mind and situation. Binary thinking seems to be the path of least resistance for the perceptual system, for thinking, and for linguistic structures. The easiest way to classify complex information is to clump it into two piles. Indeed the most instinctive and tempting clumps to use for complex data are the old favorites: like/don't like, ours/theirs, right/sinister, sheep/goats. This is why dichotomies tend to come packaged with positive and negative poles. It may be that the very structure of our bodies and our placement in phenomenal reality invite us to see things in terms of binary oppositions (see Lakoff and Johnson). Indeed, the very same poststructuralists who are so unhappy about too many binary oppositions in structuralism seem to invite far more of them into their model for how human language and meaning function:

> A fundamental principle of structural and semiotic analysis is that elements of a text do not have intrinsic meaning as autonomous entities but derive their significance from oppositions which are in turn related to other oppositions in a process of theoretically infinite semiosis. (Culler, *Pursuit* 29)

> To speak of the concept of "brown," for example, is, according to semiotics, a way of referring to a complex network of oppositions which articulates the spectrum of colors on the one hand and the spectrum of sounds on the other. (Culler, *Pursuit* 41)

The question, then, is not whether to deal with dichotomies but how to deal with them. There are basically five options: (1) Choose one side as right or better. This is "either/or" thinking; (2) Work out a compromise or a dialectical synthesis; that is, find a third term; (3) Deny there is any conflict (for example, "There is no difference between form and content," or "There is no conflict between teaching and research"); (4) Affirm both sides of the dichotomy as equally true, necessary, important, or correct. This is the approach I argue in this essay; (5) Reframe the conflict so there are more than two sides. This is, of course, another good path. I don't particularly explore it in this essay, but notice that I utilize it in making this very list.

The first three options are the most common and habitual ways we deal with dichotomy or conflict because humans seem to be uncomfortable with what is unreconciled or incompatible. Psychologists can explain the most diverse range of human thinking, feeling, and behavior in terms of our instinctive resistance to "cognitive dissonance": when we are presented with conflicting data, the organism seems to want somehow to find *some* kind of harmony or unity. Even at a sensory level we are constantly presented with contrasting views and shifting perceptions, but our brains always yield single, stable objects and categories (see Peckham). And I have an additional important reason for focusing on binary thinking in this paper. Even though binary oppositions tempt people to oversimple, black/white thinking, binary oppositions also present us with uniquely valuable occasions for balance, irresolution, nonclosure, nonconsensus, nonwinning. So I will celebrate and explore here the approach to binary oppositions that seems to go against the grain and require some conscious discipline: affirming both sides of a dichotomy as equally true or important, even if they are contradictory.

Of course, I'm not going so far as to say that we should balance *every* dichotomy we encounter. Certainly, it sometimes makes sense to choose one side as right, the other wrong. Indeed, when we need to make difficult value judgments or sort out slippery distinctions, pairings are an enormous help. Opticians harness this process when helping us figure out which lens is right for us. And this whole essay could be called an exercise in saying, "There are two kinds of binary thinking, the good kind and the bad kind." In short, I acknowledge that now and then we need the invidious kind of binary opposition. I'm just pleading for more effort to notice the many situations where the easy, good/bad distinction gets us in trouble and we need balance and irresolution.

Three Applications
Let me now apply this balancing kind of binary thinking to three examples: writing, teaching, and thinking/learning.

Writing
We cannot write well unless, on the one hand, we are able to come up with a plenitude of words and thoughts—an ability that is enhanced by a welcom-

ing attitude of open acceptingness where we refrain from evaluating and criticizing. Yet on the other hand, we cannot write well unless we are able to evaluate, criticize and reject—an ability enhanced by an attitude of tough-minded skepticism. In short, skill in writing involves skill at generating and criticizing. In recent years, some people have called this view outmoded dichotomous thinking, arguing that the opposition between generating and criticizing breaks down. This criticism can take two forms: (1) to deny that there is any difference between generating and criticizing, and (2) to accept the difference but to insist that it's foolish or impossible to separate them. I'll speak to each criticism separately.

(1) This is a common response: "Every piece of generating is by the same token also a piece of criticizing, since the act of putting down one word is also the act of rejecting a host of other words we could have put down. The generating/criticizing dichotomy is an accident of words; we are being fooled by our categories." This objection is a logical quibble. That is, even though choosing X may seem logically the same as rejecting Y and Z, they are not the same as human acts or mental processes. That is, when we choose X, we may indeed be rejecting Y and Z in the same breath, but often we are not rejecting anything at all. We simply write down X because it's the only thing that comes to mind. Y and Z were never there to be rejected. Writing down X when it's the only thing in mind is a very different act from writing it down when you also have Y and Z in mind—especially when you are torn between them. What I'm pursuing here are the human abilities to generate and criticize, and what's important is that both are variables; they represent choices: at any instant of writing we may be generating a great deal or not very much, and we may at the same instant be *criticizing* a great deal or not much.[6]

If, instead of denying the difference between generating and criticizing, we look for it and honor it, we get a model with considerable explanatory power. By noticing how generating and criticizing tend to get in each other's way, we can better understand why writing tends to be so difficult and why the process of writing tends to proceed in the variable ways that it does. That is, when writing goes very badly, we are stuck or blocked. We are tied in knots by trying to be generative and critical at the same time. When writing goes passably but not very well, it is usually because we are having to *negotiate a compromise* between these conflicting mentalities: when generating gains the upper hand, we manage to pour out a lot of material but we cannot make it critically focused; when criticizing gains the upper hand, what we produce is good, but we produce very little because we see every potential fault in every sentence as we start to write it. But in some sessions (if we are lucky) writing goes amazingly well: somehow at one and the same moment we seem to be able to reach out for just the right word and yet, seemingly without effort or even awareness, we put aside countless possibilities that aren't just right.[7]

A few people write consistently well. Indeed, I could tell this story in terms of *people* too, not just writing sessions. The characteristic method or

style of going about writing that people develop often represents their way of negotiating the conflict between creating and criticizing. That is, some writers are characteristically blocked. They are equally skilled at finding words and criticizing them so their writing method is the famous one of staring at the paper till blood breaks out on their foreheads. Others are characteristically undisciplined and loose, or characteristically cramped or tight. And a few seem magically integrated.

People have a hard time explaining what it is that wonderful writers do, ascribing it to genius or to magic or to the muses. Writers themselves give remarkably contradictory accounts of what they're doing: "It's all inspiration," or "It's all perspiration," or "It's all system," or "It's all magic and serendipity." Just what you might expect if people were explaining a complex skill which they happened to have learned but which violates normal patterns of explanation. Their skill represents the ability to be magically extreme at both skills. *Transcendence* is probably the right word, and it is a worthy goal to keep in mind. But it's no good taking transcendence as standard advice or rule of thumb for ourselves or our students: "If you want to write well, just transcend opposites." However, I think that much of the traditional advice about writing is really advice to help with transcendence—for example, taking walks, waiting humbly, abnegating the self, paying homage to the muses, relinquishing some agency and control, meditating—even drinking.

But whatever the path one takes to good writing, notice that it is not the path of compromise or the golden mean. If we are only *sort of* generative and *sort of* critical, we write mediocre stuff: we don't have so much to choose from, and we reject only the worst. We need extremity in both directions. Instead of negotiating one point on the continuum between two extremes, we need as it were to occupy two points—near both ends.

(2) But there's a second way to argue against the dichotomy between generating and criticizing: "Sure, there's a difference between them, but God save us from all advice to separate them. That puts us back in the Dark Ages with a rigid 'stage' theory of writing: prewriting/writing/rewriting. Real writers don't do that; no writers do. Haven't you heard of all the research showing that writing is recursive?" I'm not trying to deny that writing is often recursive, or even usually so. Of course generating and criticizing often go on at the same time; that's the default mode for lots of people. But I am insisting that they don't *always* go on at the same time and that in fact it's helpful sometimes consciously to separate them since they get in each other's way. In short, we can at times make writing less recursive.

Notice that I am introducing the dimension of time. What is paradoxical in logic—being both generative and critical, occupying two spots on a single continuum—is ordinary in time. Thus, the most well-worn path for negotiating the conflict between generating and criticizing is by separating them in time. That is, even though it seems natural to try to *find* words and thoughts and *scrutinize* them at the same time to see if they are the right ones, this

doesn't mean that we cannot become more skilled at engaging in these activities one at a time, thus separating the two mentalities. (Notice, for example, how in most speaking situations, we don't put much energy into scrutinizing the words as they come to mind or to mouth.) And in fact many writers have gradually learned to pour down words and thoughts helter-skelter and then come back to work on them later in a specially vigilant, detached, and critical frame of mind (that is, to edit or revise). The time dimension helps us heighten the conflict, not minimize it, permitting us to clear an arena in which each side can operate unhampered to an extreme.

This, then, is the approach to heightening and separating opposites that I gradually learned, and I find I can teach it to students and teachers with helpful results. It is a skill. People often have an easier time taking risks, turning off all criticism and thereby coming up with words and thoughts they didn't know they had, when they know they will have time to be wholeheart-edly critical and get rid of foolishness. And people often have an easier time being fiercely critical when they have gotten themselves to write too much, to generate too many ideas and hypotheses. (I have found it helpful, by the way, to notice a link between this generating/criticizing dichotomy and two others: planning/not planning; controlling/relinquishing control. Writers com-monly talk about the need for periods of relaxed planning or control.)

For further evidence of the conflict between generating and criticizing, notice another way in which they are commonly separated: into different *people*. We see this most clearly in the institution of *editor*: a person whose function is to criticize. Every writer who has a good editor is deeply grateful. It's true that some editors do *some* rewriting, but usually only at the stylistic level, not at the substantively generative level. But because editors must be so vigilantly critical in their reading, many of them find they have great difficulty engaging in writing themselves. Teachers often have the same problem since they spend so much time criticizing student writing. Another separation: when people write collaboratively, often some members of the group function more as generators and idea people and others more as organizers and criticizers. When we see those clumps of names at the bottom of *Time* magazine articles, we know that some of the people were editors and criticizers and others were gatherers and draft writers.

Teaching

The same kind of conflict lies at the heart of the teaching process. As teachers, too, we are inevitably asked to take two conflicting stances or engage in two opposed behaviors. On the one hand, we are asked to be allies, helpers, or hosts to students, to invite all students to enter in and join the learning community. And we can usually help them learn better if we take a somewhat positive or inviting stance and assume they *can* learn, that they *are* intelligent, that they *have* what it takes.[8] Yet, just as inevitably we need to be on guard—to scrutinize, examine, test, reject. We have a loyalty not just to

students but to society and to the body of knowledge we are teaching. We have to criticize what is wrong, reject what is unsatisfactory, be tough. In short, to teach well we have to be good hosts and good bouncers; we need skill both as ally and adversary. Teaching, like writing, may often be recursive, but it is a recursive blending or alternation of two conflicting dimensions: opening the gate wide and keeping the gate narrow.

We can heighten our awareness of this conflict of teaching stances or roles by noticing how students often skitter ungracefully between confiding in us as allies and guarding against us as adversaries. And they are right; we are usually both. Notice how these two teaching roles (like the two writing roles) are sometimes institutionalized as separate people. The tutor's function, for example in a writing center, is to be helper, and there is no need to be adversary at all. The examiner's function is to be adversary or critic. Oxford and Cambridge, like many European universities, have distinguished between teacher/tutor and examiner since the Middle Ages.

When I talk to most teachers at any length, they tell me that this conflict speaks to the difficulty they experience in teaching. But the difficulty is unavoidable because, again, compromise or reconciliation is not the answer. Look at the options. A happy medium or golden mean is no good: being only sort of helpful or inviting to students and only sort of vigilant as to whether they do decent work. Similarly, it's no good only welcoming students and never critically examining their work; nor only criticizing wrong answers and never welcoming open perplexity and inviting the taking of risks. Most teachers are stuck having to occupy one point along the continuum that students know so well: from being "tough teachers" to being "easy teachers." We often vacillate: "This term, it's no more Mr. Nice Guy." But really skilled teachers somehow find ways to do justice to these opposites in all their irreconcilability. Again we see two ways to do this. The rarer path is one of mysterious finesse or transcendence. That is, a few remarkable teachers are extremely tough and inviting *at the same time*—remarkably welcoming to students yet remarkably discriminating in saying, "I won't take anything but the best." The more ordinary path to good teaching involves finding ways to separate the two stances: finding times to be inviting and encouraging and other times to be especially vigilant. We tend to be more inviting at the beginning of a course or in our opening explorations and explanations of something, and more vigilant at the ends of courses and as we test. Somewhere toward the middle or end of a course, students often feel, "Hey, I thought this teacher was my friend. What happened?"[9]

Thinking and Learning

We see the same contradiction at the heart of the intellectual process itself: a conflict between doubting and believing. The centrality of doubting is obvious. The ability to find flaws or contradictions has been foundational in the development of logic and in the critical tradition running from Socrates

through Descartes and undiminished to now. Criticism and skepticism are usually identified with intelligence itself. Less noticed, however, is the central need in the intellectual process for skill in believing: the ability to "try on," enter into, and experience ideas or points of view different from the ones we presently hold. Since "credulity," the tendency just to go along with whatever seems attractive or appealing or persuasive, is the main problem in the thinking of children or unsophisticated adults, and since schooling and careful thinking seem to consist of the process of *giving up* credulity and being instead more critical minded or skeptical, we have tended to overlook the fact that people are seldom skilled at thinking and learning unless they are also skilled at entering into and even believing ideas and points of view that are difficult for them. In short, we need skill both at doubting even what looks right, and at believing even what looks crazy or alien. This is one reason why good thinking and learning are so hard.

Of course, most thinking involves some kind of combination or recursive intertwining of these mental activities, and it feels artificial to most people to try to separate them. But that feeling is misleading and stems from the dominance of criticism in our culture's model of thinking and learning. Actually, we are all perfectly accustomed to the process of trying to remove all believing or credulity in order to clear a space for uninterrupted, focused doubting or criticism. What we are less accustomed to is the effort to remove all doubting and criticism in order to clear a space for uninterrupted, focused believing.[10]

So this is the same kind of dichotomy. Intellectual skill represents skill at opposites—accepting and rejecting, swallowing and spitting out, letting oneself be invaded and keeping oneself intact. And just as with writing and teaching, we see that at those moments of consummate skill in thinking, we seem to be able to manage what is paradoxical: we can get our mind around what is alien and odd and enter into unknown terrain, yet we are acute in our discriminating rejections.

Let me summarize. I'm arguing the benefits of one *kind* of binary thinking for understanding writing, teaching, and thinking: emphasizing dichotomies but holding them unresolved, giving equal affirmation to both sides. This model explains the natural distribution of skills in these complex activities of writing, teaching, and thinking. That is, people commonly negotiate a compromise between these conflicting skills or mentalities in a zero-sum economy: being strong at one side of things (generativity or openness or believing) and correspondingly weak at the other; or else middling at both, achieving a kind of compromise but not excellence at either. Excellence is difficult because it requires doing justice to conflicting demands. Meeting those demands *simultaneously* is especially rare—and mysterious. It is easier to meet conflicting demands one at a time, though this leads to a process that seems less seamless, graceful, artful—a more bumpy, back and forth, artificial seeming process. It is thus recursive, though most

people cannot become extreme at one mentality or another when they switch back and forth too rapidly.

Examining Traditional Dichotomies

In the three examples I've just looked at, I have been engaged in emphasizing oppositions or conflicts that are often unnoticed or overlooked. In a sense I have been introducing dichotomies where some deny they exist. But now let me deal with much-noticed, traditional dichotomies. They will also benefit from this same kind of balancing, double-affirmation approach.

First, the dichotomy between the *private* and the *social* dimension of writing. The current conversation seems to have foundered on the polarity itself. Participants in the current private versus social debate seem to assume the incompatibility of the two and celebrate one or the other, condemning the opposite. But as so many thinkers have recognized (notably George Herbert Meade and John Dewey), *either/or* thinking is the problem here. Clearly, humans are both inherently connected and intertwined with others, but also inherently separate. Language comes to us from outside; nevertheless, the language we speak and write also comes to us from the inside, as early as age three or four. We can focus on either dimension of how humans exist with each other: from an ultimate point of view, everything we say or write comes from outside—we don't make up words; but from a proximate point of view, all the language that comes to our lips or our pens comes from the inside.

If we take the trouble to step outside the doctrinal bickering, we can easily see that it is a good thing to be more than usually social, but also to be more than usually private. The more we connect and communicate with others, the more . . . well, who needs to argue this point these days? But a moment's thought will also show that we are clearly better off the more we can hold commerce with ourselves, pursue trains of thought through inner dialogues even if no one else is interested, resist or tune out the pressures of others, keep our selves separate.[11] We have good reason to value social discourse and to see social interrelatedness everywhere, even where we don't notice it at first, but we have equally good reason to value the cultivation of private, desert-island discourse and individuation.

So again, my argument is for affirming both sides equally, not a compromise but rather to push for extremity in both directions, and for resisting attempts at priority or hegemony by either side. The best way to achieve this goal, to fight clear of the trap of partisans on each side fighting to stamp out the other, is to remember what rhetoricians sometimes forget though it was Aristotle's favorite phrase (not so much in the *Rhetoric*, however): "There is one sense in which. . . ." There is a sense (currently much publicized) in which all language is social. But just as clearly, there's a sense in which all language is private: the tapping on prison walls by individuals in solitary confinement,

with only slight chances of being heard much less understood. Not either/or but both/and.

When both/and is the goal, it follows that the weaker or neglected dimension needs to be strengthened. Thus, it's obviously a problem when persons are *only* private and always hold themselves apart and unrelated to others and don't know how to connect or function socially. But it's equally problematic when people are *only* social and can only think and use language when there are others around to interact with, and when they can only think those thoughts that others agree with or are interested in. Such people are too subject to peer pressure; we use the expression, they "have no mind of their own" (even though from the other point of view we recognize that there is no such thing as a completely solitary mind, which is Aristotle's point in saying humans are "social animals").

As with the other dichotomies I've considered, the opposed sides *can* work together and reinforce each other when all goes well. The more of a social life one has, the richer one's private life can be. As Vygotsky and others point out, our private life is often a folding in of what was first social. But it goes the other way too: the more private life one has—that is, the more one is able to have conversations with oneself and follow thoughts and feelings in different directions from those of people around one—the more richly *social* a life one can have. Putting it yet another way: someone with no private life at all is in one sense completely social, is nothing but social; but in another sense this person is less richly social for bringing less of his or her own mental amalgam to the colloquy.[12]

The last three dichotomies I want to consider are also much noticed and traditional, but instead of being "hot" popular dichotomies, these are often felt as old, passé, or wrong-headed: teaching versus research; form versus content; and reading versus writing. And as in the case of generating versus criticizing, many people want to deny these dichotomies and call them wrongheaded and false, to assert that they are the epiphenomena of traditional linguistic categories and that there is no opposition or conflict at all in them. But when people deny these dichotomies, it seems to me they are engaging in wishful thinking or propping up a doctrinal position, or (consciously or not) defending or disguising a dominance of one side by the other. My theme here, and in a sense throughout my whole essay, is this: beware of happy harmonies and mystical unions; look out for declarations of no conflict.

Teaching Versus Research
"No problem; teaching and writing reinforce each other." This is the latest doctrine, and a prime case of wishful thinking. Of course, research *can* help teaching and vice versa, just as generating can reinforce criticizing. But it is weak thinking to slide from there into the ever-recurring pious doctrine that

there is no conflict between teaching and research. The two activities compete for our time, attention, and loyalty in the most concrete and obvious way. The extensive time I'm spending on this essay is time I cannot spend on my teaching. I get completely involved in writing it and find myself putting off preparation or reading I ought to do for my classes. What I do here may make me a smarter more thoughtful teacher, but I cannot really *apply* this work to my teaching. Few faculty members can bring their research directly into their undergraduate teaching.

But it's not just a matter of wishful thinking. When people claim that there is no conflict between teaching and research, they are usually, consciously or not, covering up or reinforcing the dominance of research over teaching. Teachers and administrators at two-year colleges and in the schools don't seem to be so tempted to proclaim that there is no conflict between teaching and research.

It's important to try to think carefully about this important political matter. It may be a good thing for teachers to do research, since it can make them more intellectually lively in their teaching (though do we really want to say that the teachers we've had who cared most about research were always the most intellectually lively?). And it may be a good thing for researchers to teach, since it can help them be more aware of the relationships between what they are investigating and common awareness and the learning process. Nevertheless, it would be patent nonsense to say you can't do one well without doing the other.

The theoretical point illuminated by my model is this: teaching and research don't need each other (just as generating and criticizing don't need each other); indeed, the two sides of the dichotomy have a tendency to get in each other's way. It's only writing that needs both generating and criticizing. And it's only a certain model of being an academic that needs both teaching and research. Teachers can be good without doing research, just as researchers can be good without teaching. Editors can be good without doing any generating, just as draft writers or information gatherers or "leg-persons" can be good without doing any editing.[13]

So what does this dichotomous model tell us about how to improve the relationship between teaching and research? We can follow the same principles here as above. A few gifted people can make teaching and research work together simultaneously, but most people need to take steps to keep the two from getting in each others' way, which usually means finding times to give *full* attention and commitment to each. Full attention is important because what we want is extremity in both sides: we don't want half-hearted teaching and half-hearted research; we want deeply committed teaching and research. Some people can give full attention to writing and research for a few hours each day and switch to give just as full attention to teaching for the rest of the day. Most people can't switch back and forth so quickly and need longer periods to commit themselves to one or the other. Clearly, we can't

improve the weaker side of the dichotomy, teaching, by blithely proclaiming that there is no conflict between the two and that research always helps teaching—meanwhile continuing to give all the incentives to research and very few to teaching. We have to decide whether we are willing to give the incentives to teaching without which it can never thrive.

The trickier and more politically sensitive question is whether we can or should save the "university" model of what an academic is: someone who necessarily teaches *and* does research. I don't see that the model of dichotomies suggests answers to this essentially political question. What seems to be happening is that people like those associated with the Carnegie Commission are suggesting a conception of "research" that isn't so much at odds with teaching: a model of research that doesn't necessarily involve conventional competitive publication.

Form Versus Content

"Form and content are indissoluble; we can't distinguish them or judge one apart from the other. Surely you don't want to be associated with old-fashioned school teachers who give split grades!"[14] Of course form and content are linked and are often functions of each other. A change in one will likely make some change in the other. But the notion that we cannot distinguish or talk about or evaluate them separately flies in the face of common sense and common practice. Here, as in the other oppositions I've discussed, opposites *do* fuse or magically interact when everything is going perfectly. That is, in the ideal poem, form and content function just as the doctrine proclaims they should: we can't tell the dancer from the dance. But in ordinary sublunary texts, we have no trouble telling which is the dancer. The reason the text is not magical is that dancer and dance *don't* perfectly realize each other. We can tell, for example, that the content is working better than the form, or vice versa. When we talk about imperfect texts or texts in progress or nonliterary texts—for example, about student texts, about our own texts, or about university guidelines for tenure, as opposed to Keats' poems—our statements almost invariably imply a difference between form and content. Yes, in the last analysis, theoretically, any change in wording causes a change in meaning (at least fractionally). But the point is that we make changes in wording because we can palpably feel and distinguish gaps between form and content.

I sense that this doctrine of the indistinguishability of form and content serves to enshrine literary language as special and desirable, and, oddly enough, to hold up literary language as paradigmatic of all language. The doctrine seems to give special honor to form.

Reading Versus Writing

The idea that there is no conflict between reading and writing is a classic case of pious doctrine serving to cover the privilege or dominance of one spouse

over the other.[15] For many reasons, often political, it is crucial to recognize the difference between the act of trying to fit your mind around words someone else chose, and trying to choose your own words and get others to fit their minds around them. There is a basic difference especially in agency and control. At the overtly political level, we see this dominance in the vastly superior working conditions given to teachers of reading or literature in higher education compared to teachers of writing (Slevin). At the theoretical level, we see a clear conflict of interest between readers and writers in deciding on the meaning and interpretation of a text: it's in the interest of writers that they should decide what their own text means; it's in the interest of readers to say that only readers can decide what a text means. Clearly, there's no right answer: either/or, zero-sum arguments are a trap, and so is a compromise: both points of view must be given full or even extreme validity. At the present critical moment (a moment that has lasted rather a long time), authority is tipped more toward readers than writers.

Of course reading and writing *can* serve or reinforce each other. Input can serve output, and vice-versa. But (just as in teaching/research), the reinforcement is one-sided unless it is built on a recognition of conflicting interests between the two sides and the current privileging of one side. When harmony is just spouted as a pious doctrine, it tends to support the dominance of reading in the current academic world. It tends to be used in support of proposals to scrap the only writing course in college and make it into a reading-and-writing course, while the majority of reading (literature) courses are tacitly invited to remain as they are—namely, committed primarily to reading. We must view with suspicion any pronouncements of happy harmony when the status quo serves one side more than the other.

If we look back at the earlier dichotomies I explored—in writing, teaching, thinking—we can see the same dynamic: when people claim that there is no real dichotomy or no real conflict, their arguments serve (whether consciously or not) to cover up and reinforce an ingrained power imbalance. For example, when people argue that there is no conflict between generating and criticizing in writing, or between believing and doubting in thinking and learning, they are reinforcing the present dominance of criticism and critical thinking in the academic or intellectual realm. They are reinforcing the prevailing assumption that it is a good thing to clear space for nonstop, unrelieved criticism or doubting while people write or think, but that it is a bad thing to clear space for nonstop, unrelieved generating or believing or making a mess. Periods of extreme control and planning are currently felt to be fine, but not periods of nonplanning or relinquishing control. Extremity in doubting is fine, but extremity in believing is bad. This attitude toward belief is so ingrained in our academic and intellectual culture that people don't realize that what they are afraid of—namely, fanaticism or closed-mindedness—represents not extremity of belief but poverty of belief: the ability to believe only one thing.

Epistemology of Experience Versus Epistemology of Propositions
The *kind* of binary thinking I'm advocating here, an approach that tries to heighten dichotomies and affirm both sides equally, involves a special link or even commitment to experience. There is a phenomenological bias, perhaps even a bias toward narrative. My own story is paradigmatic. That is, I came to this approach through my *experience* of writing, primarily an experience of perplexity or even bafflement. I quit graduate school when I got so blocked I couldn't write. When I finally came back five years later, I was scared and self-conscious about writing, so for four years I scribbled notes to myself, short ones and long ones, about what was happening to me as I wrote, especially when things went particularly badly or well. It was from these experiential, often narrative notes that I developed the hypothesis that writing was hard because of the conflicting needs to generate but criticize, control but let go, say "yes" but "no." My thinking grew out of a process of trying to be true to my experience and to find a theory that didn't violate it.

I've come to think that this approach to dichotomies honors the complexity of one's experience and the wandering narrative of events. The approach invites experience to precede logic. And here too of course there is a tradition: an empirical, inductive, pragmatic tradition that favors Aristotle's science over Plato's, Bacon over Descartes, and that we see in William James and John Dewey. You can't say what I've just said, however, without someone quickly objecting, "But there is no such thing as experience without theory; that's naive American Romanticism. Theory is always already in everything we do. No act can be innocent of theory." But here again this claim, and it has become a doctrinal chant, papers over a another binary distinction: theory versus practice. (Boethius pictures Dame Philosophy with two prominent letters embroidered on her robe, Theta and Pi.) The claim that there is no dichotomy or conflict between theory and practice tends to champion theory over practice.

Of course it's true that no act is innocent of premises and implications. But it is a failure of clear thinking to let that fact blind us to a crucial difference: between coming at a piece of experience with a conscious and explicit theory in mind versus coming at it as openly as possible—making an effort to try to hold theory at bay—and trying to articulate what happens. It is true that trying to hold theory at bay and not articulating our tacit theories serves to open ourselves to self-deception: we tend to "find" theories that we are already predisposed to believe. But when people spend all their time wagging their finger at this danger, they tend to miss a crucial experience. We can increase our chances of seeing more complexity and contradiction in our experience, and finding new theories or theories that surprise us, if we make an effort to honor and attend to experience as closely as possible. This process can even lead us to theories we are predisposed *not* to believe—theories we don't like. We usually notice this difference, for example, between two textures of research—for instance, in classroom research: where the observer

starts with a position and consciously looks at everything through that lens, or where the observer tries to take notes about what he or she is seeing and feeling from moment to moment and waits to see what gestalts emerge.

There is in fact a strong tradition of trying to pay good attention to one's experience. See, for example, what is called "reflective practice," an approach that stresses the movement from practice to theory and that has a debt to Dewey and Lewin (see Schön). Developed even more carefully, this tradition has become the discipline of phenomenology, involving what is called "bracketing." One can get better at it. Like the discipline of holding off critical thinking or holding off awareness of audience, people mustn't say it can't be done just because they haven't learned how to do it. If we want to get better at attending to experience, it helps to notice the competing demands of theory and logic.

Let me stress again that my enthusiasm for experience and induction is not a claim that they are superior or prior or privileged. I don't claim that induction is better than deduction, Aristotle than Plato, Bacon than Descartes, Dewey than Derrida. I am simply resisting a counter claim of priority, an assumption of privilege. I'm simply jostling for fifty percent of the bed. I am trying to maintain a balanced and unresolved opposition in order to prevent either side from being slid into the margin by means of a haughty denial of oppositional thinking. In fact, I acknowledge that the view I am presenting in this paper has attained such a degree of generality as to become a theoretical bulldozer itself. To the degree that I fall in love with my theory of opposites, I'm liable to use it to bludgeon experience. But I don't shrink from this. I have no hesitation about turning around and celebrating theory too. Sometimes it is only by bludgeoning experience—for example, through being obsessed with something—that we can make experience give up secrets that we don't get by innocent observation. But to the degree that I am committed to experience, then I will struggle, in addition and on certain occasions, to try to keep my eyes and pores open and hold off my preoccupation with opposites.

I want to call attention to a connection between this emphasis on experience and the work of some of the earlier figures in the field of composition: Macrorie, Britton, Murray, myself, and others. What these figures had in common, and what seems to me to characterize that moment in the history of composition, was a burgeoning interest in the *experience* of writing. There was a mood of excitement about talking about what actually *happens* as we and our students write. Thus, there was lots of first person writing and informal discourse. And thus the overused term for the movement: the "process approach." People wanted to talk about experience during the process of writing, not just about the resultant text or product. "Process" connotes experience.[16]

I see a correlation between this emphasis on the experience or process of writing and a willingness to articulate contraries and leave them unre-

solved. To be open and honest about experience leads to unresolved and conflicting propositions. This opening period of the "process" movement in composition corresponds, I'd say, to the moment when literary critics were interested in reader-response criticism: "Let's try to tell what actually happens to us as we read." (I called this "giving movies of the reader's mind" in *Writing without Teachers* in 1973). But since then, scholars in both literature and composition (with the notable exception of some feminists) have tended to back away from this interest in talking honestly and personally about their own experience. An autobiographical openness about one's own experience doesn't seem to fit comfortably with our current model of academic scholarship. Thus, I call the approach to binaries that I'm talking about an epistemology of experience, whereas an insistence on logical coherence is more an epistemology of propositions.

Epistemology and Rhetoric
The kind of binary thinking that I celebrate here would seem to suggest a skeptical epistemology: a distrust of language and of the possibilities of knowing (Gibson). Ontologically, however, this tradition is somewhat more affirmative, since it implies a faith that we live in a world consisting of more than just our minds and language and logic. There are things we can have a kind of commerce with, even though our minds and language and logic are not well fitted to them. But once I put it this way, I have grounds for being less epistemologically gloomy: the implication is that if we can sit there and hold the two irreconcilable propositions in mind—at least if they are the right ones—we can make some sort of *approach* to knowledge of the complexity of things. There is a link to metaphor here. Just as new metaphors are always created out of a conflict or contradiction between the correct use of a term or phrase and the "mistaken" or "wrong" way it is being used here, and just as new metaphors often *point at* something which is not yet signified by words, so too a well-maintained, unresolved opposition can point at something that cannot otherwise be articulated. The physicists have gotten used to this sort of thing with their conclusion that light must unavoidably be described as both wave and particle. Both models or descriptions must be upheld despite their mutual contradiction.

What's interesting to me here, however, is the paradoxical relationship between this epistemology of contradiction and *rhetoric*. Even though I'm arguing throughout for more difference, more contradiction, more of what Boethius called "war" between truths, I think I'm opening a door to a rhetoric that is less warlike or adversarial. Look at how rhetoric or persuasion or argument usually work. When people argue and call each other wrong, they tend to assume that only one of them is right. Graff explores the link between epistemology and adversarial rhetoric. If there is only one truth or right answer, then people need to fight for supremacy; those with the wrong answer must be suppressed or brought around. But if we celebrate binary thinking

of the sort I've been describing, there's every chance of discovering that both parties to the argument are right, despite their disagreement. Their two claims, even though completely contradictory (X and not-X), might *both* be accurate and useful views of the complex phenomena they are fighting about. If they were more open to the epistemology of contradiction, they might come closer to a full description and understanding of the issue under discussion by affirming and entering into each other's propositions (without having to give up allegiance to their own). There is less need to try to bludgeon people into agreement. Thus, John Trimbur's essay celebrating dissensus or the limits of consensus has been extremely fruitful and influential in the profession, coming as it does out of the tradition of Bruffee and his consensus-based model of social construction.

My interest in affirming oppositions, then, connects with my interest in nonadversarial, nonviolent, nonoppositional rhetoric: rhetoric as believing game (see "Methodological"). More and more people are noticing the problems with either/or rhetoric (as opposed to both/and rhetoric): the assumption that in order to argue *for* a position, we must argue *against* the contrary position as wrong. Thus the shape or strategy in conventional persuasive essays: start out by trying to show that the other view is wrong.

Of course, this approach tends to backfire on psychological grounds—apart from any epistemological considerations. It assumes that if I want to get you to consider my point of view, I must first get you to confess you are stupid or mistaken for holding yours. But this rhetorical strategy is unnecessary. I'll do better at getting you to see the strengths of my view if I don't first have to get you to confess your error or cry uncle. And I'll increase my chances of success if *I*, in turn, am able to see the truth of *your* view.

Things seem to have conspired, these days, to help us see more clearly than ever the limits of an either/or model of dealing with conflict (for example, in war or adversarial litigation), a model where people define success only as the defeat of the other party. Lakoff and Johnson, in their exploration of the tacit "metaphors we live by," show how deeply enmeshed our culture is in the assumption that "argument equals war." More and more people are exploring alternative models for handling conflict in various realms—rhetorical models too.[17] It's my contention, then, that the kind of binary thinking I describe here, an epistemology of contradiction, will help people get unstuck from either/or, zero-sum, adversarial models of rhetoric.

Some readers will surely be itching to accuse me of not practicing what I preach, for if I am so interested in non-adversarial rhetoric and the believing game, why am I fighting so hard throughout this essay? And why in my career have I so often seemed to take partisan stands? But there are two kinds of fighting: fighting to be heard versus fighting to keep the other person from being heard; fighting to create dialogue versus fighting to insist on monologue. I am fighting here more to be heard than to wipe out the other view. We sometimes assume that we have only two options as regards fighting:

either we fight (which means trying to exterminate the enemy or his or her position) or else we go into a kind of nonviolent limpness. But there is a third option. We can fight with someone to try to get them to listen to us or to consider our view—fight hard—and yet not push them to give up their view. (Of course it sometimes seems as though the enemy's only "view" is that *our view* must be stamped out, and so we feel we have no choice but to try to stamp out theirs. But mediators and negotiators have made a business of trying to deal with this situation: helping people articulate positive goals or views or needs that lie behind their merely negative stated goal of simply wiping out the enemy's goal.)

And I have been partisan. For of course I've always written more excitedly about generating than revising, and I've been preoccupied if not obsessed with freewriting. I've certainly celebrated private writing and the ability to turn off awareness of audience during certain points in the writing process. I've made more noise about teachers as allies than as evaluative adversaries. And I've campaigned my whole career for the believing game. But I've always made it clear that the goal of my enthusiasm or partisan behavior was to right the balance or bring about equal emphasis, never to try to stamp out the other side. Because there has been such a one-sided tradition in teaching and theorizing about writing—a tradition that says, "Always plan; always maintain vigilance and control, always use critical thinking"—I've seen a clear need to make a louder noise in favor of periods of non-planning, generating or freewriting, and holding off critical con- sciousness. But in all of my pushing for the generative, I've never argued against critical consciousness or doubting or criticism; only for an equal emphasis on both sides, a stronger contradiction, what D.H. Lawrence called the "trembling instability of the balance" (172).

Despite my enthusiasms on one side, I have never wavered in making clear my commitment to those very contraries that I'm trying to push over to their side of the bed, out of positions of dominance: my commitment to revision and critical consciousness in writing, to subject matter and even evaluation in teaching, and to doubting in thinking and learning. And when it comes to the opposition between the private versus the social dimension in writing, I helped get the profession interested in the first place in the social and collaborative dimension of writing with my *Writing without Teachers*. Thus, I would invite readers to compare the rhetorical shape of my writing with that of people who are extremely critical of my work, such as James Berlin or Jeanette Harris. Even though I allow myself unabashed enthusiasm and open partisanship where they use tones of alleged judiciousness, com- pare the rhetorical goals. My goal has never been to wipe out the enemy but to strengthen the weaker and neglected side, to keep two sides alive and equal, to push for a dialogue among equal voices—to make room for a situation of balanced opposition.

In fact, what really needs explaining is why there has been such a tendency to see me as one-sided and extreme—to see me as someone only interested in generating, making a mess, and the private dimension; to be blind to my support for critical thinking, revising, doubting, and the social dimension in writing—when I preach over and over this theme of embracing contraries and of trying to get opposites into unresolved tension with each other. That is, I'm criticized for being narrow or one-sided, and on epistemological grounds, but really the criticism itself represents an epistemological narrowness: an inability to understand that someone can argue for balanced contraries by championing the weaker side, even though this is my continually announced and clearly explained point—a seeming inability to see an epistemological argument for contraries. The current academic world likes to celebrate indeterminacy and epistemological doubt, yet even radical theorists often seem to fall into assuming that if anyone says anything in favor of X (especially if X smacks of feelings, private discourse, or the relinquishing of control), they must by definition be against the opposite of X (thinking, analysis, logic, and the social dimension)—whatever they say to the contrary. I can't help believing, then, that a more dialectical or contradictory epistemology can lead to more large-mindedness.

And how do we learn or develop this kind of epistemology or habit of dialectical thinking? One important way we learn it is through interaction with others: through dialogue. After all, that's the original link that Socrates and Plato had in mind in their original conception of "dialectic": bring people into conversation in order to create conflict among ideas. Dialogue leads to dialectic. Just as we learn to talk privately to ourselves by internalizing social conversation with others (as George Herbert Meade and Vygotsky tell us), so we can learn the kind of binary or dialectical thinking I'm interested in from conversation. That is, our greatest source of difference and dichotomy is when people of different minds come together to talk. So in addition to calling for an "epistemology of contradiction," I could also call it an "epistemology of dialogue" or (to be fashionable) a "dialogic epistemology." But it's not enough just to have dialogue between opposing views if the dialogue is just adversarial. The question is whether the participants learn how to internalize *both* views—enlarge their mind and their assumptions—instead of just digging in and fighting harder for their own view. So it's a question of what kind of dialogue we have. Does it represent collaboration or cooperation between views that clash with each other? Or just clash? We learn rhetorical warfare from dialogue with rhetorical warriors, but we learn dialectical large-mindedness from dialogue with people who have learned an epistemology of contradiction.

The reigning epistemology among scholars and academics today is dialectical *in a sense*, but not the large-minded sense we most need. This epistemology says, in effect, "I believe X and you believe Y, and there is no real

truth or right answer in the back of the book to tell us who is right. So we can keep on fighting." What I'm looking for is a dialectical epistemology of a different sort, one that is more large-minded and hopeful. It says, "I believe *X* and you believe *Y*, and by gum we may well *both* be right—absolutely right. So we can figure out ways to work together." Notice the crucial difference of relationships here between epistemology and rhetoric. In the former case (the ruling paradigm we currently live in), we have eternal warfare between people (rhetoric) because the people don't have eternal warfare between concepts inside their minds (epistemology). In my vision of how things *can* be, we have the opposite situation: eternal warfare between concepts in the mind, resulting in more cooperation and less zero-sum warfare between people. People can be more expert at inhabiting opposite points of view and therefore more able to deal with each other cooperatively and collaboratively.

Dialectic and Rhetoric
In my exploration of binary thinking or the unresolved warfare between opposed concepts, I've talked about *site* or *location* in one sense: that we want it within people and not between people. Let me talk in this last section about site or location in a different sense: in what kind of *language* or *language use* do we find this kind of binary thinking? What I want to show is that there is a realm, a kind of discourse or a use of language, that is an ideal site for binary or oppositional thinking, an ideal arena in which to get concepts and ideas to live in fruitful tension, a realm that is different from that of rhetoric, a realm that it seems to me fair to call *dialectic*. I want to show that dialectic and rhetoric represent contrasting if not absolutely conflicting uses of language. It finally strikes me, in short, that *dialectical* and *dialectic* are similar words.

The dichotomy between dialectic and rhetoric may have been central to Plato and Aristotle, but now it is widely neglected or denied, mostly because dialectic is enormously unfashionable now. Many critics want to deny the dichotomy between rhetoric and dialectic, and also between rhetoric and poetics, and say that rhetoric denotes all language use. I wonder if there might be a connection between three current attitudes among many rhetoricians and literary critics: the sense that dialectic is unimportant or nonexistent as a realm or category of language use, the widespread criticism of dichotomous thinking, and the sense that rhetoric is the master term.

To deny the dichotomy between rhetoric and dialectic represents again the papering over of a power imbalance or an aggrandizing move by rhetoric. When people say everything is *X* (for example, all language use is rhetoric) they are making a move to push difference and opposition off the map: no conflict. My aim is to show the fruitfulness of the conflict between dialectic and rhetoric as two uses of language. The argument that everything is rhetoric can, in one sense, easily be supported by appealing to Plato and Aristotle, even though *they* insisted on a stark contrast between rhetoric and dialectic. Plato saw rhetoric as the realm of deception and dialectic as the

realm of truth; Aristotle saw rhetoric as the realm of probable knowledge and dialectic as the realm of certain knowledge. But since everyone now seems to agree that there is no such thing as certain knowledge or truth (do we have certainty about the lack of certainty?), then there is nothing left but rhetoric. Everything is partisan or persuasive.

But I think I can usefully argue for something called dialectic without defending truth or certainty. And I won't even insist on the narrow, traditional definition of rhetoric: language for the sake of persuading an audience. I'm happy to use (my sense of) Burke's wider definition. (He was a self-confessed champion and aggrandizer who sometimes seemed to see rhetoric everywhere, yet still he made distinctions between rhetoric and other uses of language. For example, in his *Rhetoric of Motives*, he clearly distinguishes between poetic, scientific, and rhetorical uses of language [42].) Burke repeatedly characterizes rhetoric as language that is trying to have an effect on an audience (even of course the audience of self). He stresses rhetoric as language that is "*addressed*" (often italicizing the word):

> Thus by a roundabout route we come upon another aspect of Rhetoric: its nature as *addressed*, since persuasion implies an audience. A man can be his own audience, insofar as he, even in his secret thoughts, cultivates certain ideas or images for the effect he hopes they may have upon him; he is here what Mead would call "an 'I' addressing its 'me.'" (38)

And dialectic? I don't want to define dialectic as the realm of truth or certain knowledge, and in fact I am being speculative and exploratory here and so I am not trying for precision. But I think I can point to and characterize a large and important realm of language use that is clearly different from that of rhetoric. I would describe dialectic, then, that prime arena for dialectical thinking, as constituting a use of language where the goal is not to have an effect on readers—language that is *not* addressed. Or putting it positively, dialectic means the use of language where the prime goal is to get meanings, concepts, and words to interact with each other, to see where they go; where the goal is to get language to *make* meaning rather than deploy that meaning toward an effect; where the goal is "figuring out" or "figuring" (as with numbers), doing calculations; even language as play. The central thing, then, is that we are using language in such a way that there is not the *pressure* that is imposed by "address," the attempt at effect, and audience—the pressure of rhetoric.

In the present critical climate, this is a slippery and controversial notion. Let me give some examples. I think we most often use language for dialectic in a more private way—writing or talking or verbally thinking *for ourselves*. Not that all private discourse is dialectic. As Burke and others point out, in language for ourselves we are often trying to have an effect or be winning towards that audience of "me." But privacy is a realm that at least invites dialectic and makes it easier, not to have an effect on ourselves but to explore or follow.

It's my experience that I cannot easily see both sides of questions unless I take myself out of the rhetorical arena, away from audience, away from having to address or have an effect. So much of our language use is rhetorical: it's addressed and for effect; it's the path of habit, of least resistance; perhaps for some people the only use. But I'm interested in paying attention to those times when we use language with more curiosity, more willingness to let things turn out any which way. Presumably, much of our verbal thinking is language of this sort ("Oh no, I wonder if I'm wrong. Should I admit it?"). Of course, someone might object that the language we use for ourselves to make meaning or figure is designed to have "an effect" on our audience of self—namely, to clarify our thinking. But this is clearly not what Burke or most of us mean by language that is designed to have an effect, and to say this levels all difference and distinction.

For example, when I am trying to write to persuade or have an effect and I get confused or stuck, I've learned sometimes to take a fresh sheet or even open a new temporary file (I often call it just "X") and start exploring my perplexity for myself. I often start off with something like, "What am I really trying to say here? I think X but I feel Y and I can't figure out what is happening. Let me summarize everything I have here and everything I think and feel. Where will it take me?" (I'm a fast typist so I don't mind writing out meta-discourse.) Up till that point I had been *addressing* my language (even if I hadn't made up my mind to whom), trying to make a point or have an effect; I had a stake. But in order for me to make this move to what I'm now tempted to call dialectic, a crucial internal event must happen. I have to make a little act of letting go and give up full commitment to that point, to that effect. Not necessarily a *large* letting go. For of course I often explicitly reserve to myself the right to go back and battle for X—no matter what I discover in my little fishing trip—simply realizing that I'll probably do a better job of fighting for X if I have a better idea of whether it's right or wrong. These temporary time-outs from my rhetoric to wonder what my thinking is, or whether it is true, suggest another example: the one that lawyers make between a legal brief and a legal memorandum. The one tries to figure out how God or an ideal judge would rule in a case; the other tries to argue for one side.

My next example is best illustrated by some kinds of writing in science. When naive scientists say they achieve objectivity and write nothing but facts, current critics and theorists reply, "Haven't you read Thomas Kuhn? There *is* no objectivity or facts; all language is interested and biased." But that reply again papers over an important distinction, and it is a move that explains why so many scientists, even very sophisticated ones, resist the uses that are made of Kuhn. They recognize that indeed genuine objectivity, truth, or factuality is *not* attainable; certain knowledge cannot be had. Yet for certain pieces of discourse, even some very public pieces, they take those very goals of objectivity, truth, and factuality as their goal. They measure the success of

such discourse in terms of how close it comes to what they nevertheless recognize is an unattainable goal. In short, there is a crucial difference between using language to have an effect or make a case and using language to try to *come as close as possible* to objectivity or facts. In a way, this is merely a difference in degree, not in kind: all language is interested and used for effect, but some much less so. But that is a difference of degree with respect to results: I want to call it a difference in kind between the two goals or uses of language. It's like saying, "Whether you jump up or jump down, gravity is pulling you downward." Yes, but it still seems worth making a distinction between jumping up and down.

This is a messy business (and I'm working it out for the first time here). I'm not saying that rhetoric and dialectic don't frequently get mixed up. Of course, these stretches of discourse produced under the goals of dialectic (figurings, meaning-makings, playings with language, any of these pieces of dialectic) can slide into or be developed into or indeed be used as they are for *rhetorical* ends: as address to audience for an effect. It seems to me that some of my forays into the dialectic uses of language in the process of writing this paper have helped me create—and sometimes have even been used—in the rhetoric here.

It's crucial to keep in mind that dialectic is not a genre any more than rhetoric is: both are *goals* for *using* language. We can use language as dialectic for a long sustained piece of work extending over days or weeks or more; or we can use it for just a few moments at a time, even in the midst of a rhetorical project. But it seems to me no fair saying all language is used as rhetoric just because there's always a trace of pressure or effect; and no fair saying that people never use language this way just because one hasn't learned to do it or doesn't feel comfortable doing it.

Again here is a prime situation where we need to be smart enough to use Aristotle's formulation, "In one sense. . . ." In one sense, all language is rhetorical—addressed and for an effect. But in another sense, all language is meaning-making or figuring out or the play of meaning or play. And since some discourses are much more toward one end of this spectrum and others much more toward the other, it would be a distortion and an oversimplification (and a power play) to use only one "sense," one lens, for observing and describing the whole spectrum of all discourses.

To summarize my essay, I am celebrating binary thinking, the affirmation or nonresolution of opposed ideas. I'm maintaining that this approach to dichotomies can improve our thinking *and* our rhetoric. It involves an epistemology that doesn't just say, "We can't decide whether X or Not-X is right," but says "X and Not-X might well both be right." And (maintaining yet another dichotomy) we will probably have better luck in promoting this kind of binary thinking if we recognize that there is a realm or motive of language use that particularly invites it and that differs from rhetoric—namely dialectic.[18]

Notes

[1]Lloyd gives these reasons:

First there is the fact that many prominent phenomena in nature exhibit a certain duality: day alternates with night; the sun rises in one quarter of the sky and sets in the opposite quarter; in most climates the contrast between the seasons (summer and winter, or dry season and rainy season) is marked; in the larger animals male and female are distinct, and the bilateral symmetry of their bodies is obvious. Secondly the duality of nature often acquires an added significance as the symbolic manifestation of fundamental religious or spiritual categories: the classification of phenomena into opposite groups may reflect, and in itself form an important part of, a system of religious beliefs which expresses the ideals of the society, and by which the whole life of the society is regulated. And then a third factor must also be taken into consideration: whether or not the terms are divided into a "positive" and a "negative" pole, opposites provide a simple framework of reference by means of which complex phenomena of all sorts may be described or classified. Antithesis is an element in any classification, and the primary form of antithesis, one may say, is division into *two* groups—so that the *simplest* form of classification, by the same token, is a dualist one. (80)

[2]For a sharp critique of the use of binary oppositions, see LaCapra 23-24.

[3]I'm not sure whether I should include here the tradition of dealing with opposites by *fusing* them. This is at times a more overtly mystical tradition—dating at least from the Middle Ages and the idea of the "coincidence of opposites." Perhaps the most common recent champion of this approach is Jung. Coleridge doesn't so much think of himself as mystical when he talks about how the poet "brings the whole soul of man into activity" by reconciling "opposite or discordant qualities" such as sameness/difference, idea/image, general/concrete, manner/matter (II, 12). From one point of view, this is a different tradition, a third one, since it stresses the achievement of *unity*. Yet from another point of view, I could include this tradition since it stresses that the duality persists *in* the unity, and since it emphasizes so vehemently that neither side is dominant. But, wanting to be scrupulous, I've left out the many citations I could include from this tradition.

[4]Burke perhaps fits here, with what he calls his "Dialectician's Hymn" in "piously neo-Platonic accents" (last chapter of *The Philosophy of Literary Form*). Stanley Edgar Hyman speaks of Burke's "constant antinomian dichotomies in *Counter-Statement*, ... most particularly of the dialectic that runs through all of Burke's work from the first as a basic principle" (366). Also, William Perry and Mary Belenky et al. could be said to belong here. From the latter: "[Constructed knowers] show a high tolerance for internal contradiction and ambiguity. They abandon completely the either/or thinking . . . [and] recognize the inevitability of conflict and stress . . . " (137).

[5]See Reed.

[6]This same denial of any difference between generating and criticizing is sometimes framed in terms of criticizing: "Every act of *criticism* is simultaneously an act of generation or creation." *Sometimes* this is true: the very act of criticizing X sometimes makes Y pop into our mind. But in two other common situations the objection doesn't hold up, situations where we can clearly feel the difference between criticizing and generating: (a) the act of criticizing X sometimes makes nothing pop into our mind; (b) sometimes we write X and Y, we criticize X, and we simply stick with Y.

[7]It's probably important to mention the social dimension of these events. That is, when we are more critical, it is often because we have a particularly critical audience in mind (perhaps the real audience or perhaps a habitual "ghost" audience that floats in our head). When we are particularly generative or even magically integrated, it is often because of a particularly inviting and facilitative audience. See my *Writing with Power*, Section IV.

[8]Teachers' expectations, positive or negative, probably have more influence on how well students learn than any differences in how they teach. See Rosenthal and Jacobson.

[9]See my "Embracing Contraries in the Teaching Process."

[10]The word *belief* may cause some trouble here, seeming to connote full commitment. But

belief can imply temporary and conditional acceptance, just as doubting can imply temporary and conditional rejection. Yet, we mustn't *gut* the word *belief* either; we need the genuine ability to *take on*, experience, or take inside the alien thought. Respectful scrutiny from a distance is not good enough.

[11]Pascal writes, "All the unhappiness of men arises from one single fact, that they cannot stay quietly in their own chamber" *Pensee # 139*.

[12]Clark and Holquist say of Bakhtin, "And unlike other philosophies that oppose radical individualism in the name of the greater primacy of socially organized groups, Bakhtin's philosophy never undercuts the dignity of persons. . . . Inasfar as we are all involved in the architectonics of answerability for ourselves and thus for each other, we are all authors, creators of whatever order and sense our world can have" (348). And Dewey writes, "The very idea of education is a freeing of *individual* capacity in a progressive growth directed to *social* aims" (98).

[13]Before World War II, most academics didn't do much writing or research, nor were they expected to do it. It was only at universities that there was a strong expectation to do research—not so much at colleges. Since then the university model has been spreading throughout all of higher education.

[14]This view is intriguing in the history of fashion in English Studies: there's been a kind of bandwagon to disown everything connected with New Criticism, yet here's a New Critical doctrine that has somehow stayed enshrined.

[15]This is a large subject that I have treated elsewhere at length ("War").

[16]It had become more or less commonplace in rhetoric of the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries to say, "We can't really teach invention. It's too much of a mystery to describe where words and ideas come from. We must remain tacit about that. But we can teach about the other divisions of rhetoric." These latter were matters of product (such as style and arrangement). But starting in the 1960s, people began to say, "Well let's *do* talk more about invention. We *can* say something about the experience of finding words and ideas and what it's like when we write."

More recently those figures in composition (Britton et al) have begun to be referred to as "expressivists" or "expressionists." That term seems to me a problem and I sometimes wonder if it is not hostilely motivated. For the prime originators and theorists who use the term (such as James Berlin and Jeanette Harris) have tended to use it as a term of disapproval. None of the "expressionists" use the term "expressive" with any centrality, except Britton, and one could never sum up his views or his work with the label "expressive." I rarely see the term used except by people who identify themselves as *not* expressive. I don't think I used the term till I began to reply to its hostile uses. I'm not comfortable with it, partly because of its negative connotations, but especially because I can't get it to stand still and mean something definite and useful. If we define it narrowly—"writing that expresses how I feel"—it's fairly clear, but no one seems to use it that narrowly anymore. If we define it more broadly, it means "writing that expresses what I feel, see, think," and suddenly it is indistinguishable from any other kind of writing. Thus, it seems thankless to try to defend "expressive writing." Chris Burnham is one of the few scholars who has shown himself willing to take on the job of trying to analyze and defend expressive writing.

[17]See the extensive exploration of "Rogerian rhetoric," for example in Brent and Teich. For feminist explorations of non-adversarial rhetoric, see Frey and Lamb. Also, Ong is interesting on the history of the adversarial and irenic traditions in culture.

[18]I am very grateful to Charles Moran, John Trimbur, Robin Varnum, and Elizabeth Wallace for helpful responses and suggestions on this paper.

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The third annual W. Ross Winterowd Award for the most outstanding book on composition theory published in 1991 was awarded to Susan Miller for *Textual Carnivals: The Politics of Composition*. Honorable mention went to C. Jan Swearingen for *Rhetoric and Irony: Western Literacy and Western Lies*.

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